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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000096

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: GEN MOHAN ON IRAN, ISF, AND PIC

REF: BASRAH 89

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CLASSIFIED BY: Louis L. Bono, Director, Basrah Regional Embassy  
Office, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) SUMMARY: In an October 7 meeting, Basrah Security Chief General Mohan listed Iran as Basrah's central problem, with unrestricted arms smuggling leaving militias too powerful for him to confront directly now. As UK troops leave, he described three areas in which the U.S. could help: intelligence, job creation, and tactical support. A fourth imperative was reforming the police force. Regarding move to Iraqi control of Basrah province, Mohan said that some limited police functions could be given to Governor Wa'eli, but that the overall security portfolio needed to stay with him and the central government - which should recognize Wa'eli as governor for the sake of provincial stability. Mohan's objectives in the next three months are to defeat militias and secure the borders from Iranian arms smuggling. END SUMMARY.

#### IRAN AND LACK OF INTEL THE CENTRAL PROBLEMS

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12. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) Mohan underlined that the Iranians are the central problem in Basrah. He outlined three ways that the U.S. could help improve security as the British role (as he perceives it) in the future is diminished: intelligence, reconstruction, and tactical support. First, the U.S. needs to supply intelligence to the ISF, to deter Iran and counter the Basrah government institutions infiltrated by Iranian agents. Mohan said he has no intelligence assets to speak of, and no formal intelligence department. He claimed to have developed significant intelligence on his own, especially on border smuggling, but it is insufficient. Coordination with British intelligence services is insufficient. Mohan also lamented the lack of U.S. intelligence assets to counter Iranian operatives.

#### JOBS NEEDED

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13. (C/REL AUS, CAN, UK) Second, the city is still in dire need of effective reconstruction, partly to provide services and partly to create jobs. A number of factories, for example steel and chemical, were built or renovated by the U.S. but are not in operation. The young men who gravitate towards Badr Corps or JAM seek jobs; they are not motivated by alignment with the militia's goals. Mohan emphasized a high level of poverty and starvation in Basrah that is making working men desperate. When

the REO director warned against the militias co-opting industries, Mohan proposed the IA should be put in charge of factories.

#### SUPPORT FOR ISF

14. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) Third, the Iraqi Army (and police) need tactical support. He has asked the central government many times for effective tools, but is told there are no funds. The ISF needs vehicles, weapons and munitions. One battalion has no AK-47s; another 250 soldiers likewise have no weapons. They are facing militias armed by Iran (in addition to the arms smuggled through Maysan and Basrah that go elsewhere in Iraq), and trained by Iran (Reftel).

15. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) Neither the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) nor Ministry of Defense (MOD) has been helpful, Mohan claimed. The MOD did not send the armor and munitions that Mohan requested; instead it sent BMP-1 tracked vehicles that are not appropriate for operations in Basrah City. Mohan said he had consistently asked for wheeled BTR 80s that are more agile for urban operations. He noted that if he tried to use the BMPs in the city JAM would "burn them." (Note: A recent Shaiba visit by the U.S. MND-SE LNO demonstrated that apart from the vulnerability of the slow, tracked BMPs to IEDs, the already old vehicles are in poor condition. It was also noted that IA troops lack proper training on the BMPs. End Note.)

16. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) Mohan said that his forces are weak, but he boasts to militias that they are strong, claiming that he has helicopters and effective armor. He admitted that the exchange of two brigades with others elsewhere in Iraq was helpful as the new ones were better. Mohan concluded that Police Chief MG Jalil Khalaf Shueil was in Baghdad as we spoke asking once again for effective resources to confront the militias.

17. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) The ISF are conducting some operations against militias, Mohan asserted, but those operations are insufficient and constrained by resources. He cited the lack of

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intelligence on arms smugglers and added that he lacks the force strength to take them on. JAM leaders continue to brazenly ask Mohan and Jalil for appointments to the police or army. Mohan said that he could disarm any neighborhood, but due to the Iranian smuggling problem the militias would quickly get resupplied.

#### REORGANIZE THE POLICE

18. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) A fourth imperative Mohan stressed concerned reorganizing the police. He emphasized that the police have failed to gain control of the city and province. (Note: Both Mohan and Police Chief Jalil claim to be close friends and security partners, and we assess that this is true. However, Mohan does not shy away from criticizing the state of the police and Jalil's tactics. End Note.) Mohan suggested that the entire police force should be transferred to other provinces. Of the 15,462 police in Basrah, "all are loyal to political parties or militia." Jalil so far has received only one National Police battalion from Baghdad and these 400-500 officers pale when compared with the number of disloyal police. Still, there have been some positive security developments, Mohan noted. Now no one can carry a weapon openly on the city streets, and militias cannot get away with roadblocks.

#### PIC: KEEP CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF ISF

19. (C/REL AUS, CAN, UK) Mohan's recipe for PIC was to keep the security portfolio with the central government but make a progress towards provincial control. The police who perform functions not related to street security - traffic police, administrative staff, and some investigators -- could be separated from his command and put under provincial (the governor's) control.

¶10. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) For an effective transformation to PIC, he noted the need to resolve the dispute over the governorship, now that the court had decided in favor of Wa'eli. "How could one hand over control of the province with an unstable governate situation" he asked. He said Governor Wa'eli was his friend, but the PM had instructed him to not speak or work with the governor and emphasized that the PM would have to authorize him to reengage Wa'eli. Mohan opined that the PM should make a public statement that it was acceptable now for government officials to deal with Wa'eli as the governor.

¶12. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) The Joint Operations Center (also called Basrah Operations Center or BOC) should not be put under the governor or PC (as PC Chairman Obadi told us in an October 6 Meeting). Even if the governor is given part of the security portfolio, Mohan said it was imperative that the BOC commander continue to receive his orders from Baghdad and retain command of the border and facility protection forces. Is the Governor Wa'eli ready to assume command of the security portfolio for the city? Assuredly not, Mohan said. He said that Wa'eli never intended to be governor when he was elected to the PC. Moreover the governor has ties too strong to one party (as does Wa'eli's main rival, Hasan al-Rashid of Badr.)

#### CONFRONTING MILITIAS

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¶13. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) Mohan opined that if militias think the ISF are strong, they will shy away from confrontation. While individual political killings and attacks against high ranking police officials continue, he thought that militias are unsure if they have the strength to confront ISF in force. Mohan described JAM as continuing to have separate elements that could be exploited: the "good" JAM - the nationalists, the bad - tools of Iran, and those who go back and forth.

#### OBJECTIVES: DISARM MILITIAS AND SECURE BORDERS

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¶14. (S/REL AUS, CAN, UK) General Mohan's objectives for the next three months are to disarm militias and secure the borders. Realistically he noted that so long as the Fadhila party controlled oil resources in Basrah, they would not contest control of the province; otherwise they would fight the ISF. Badr Corps he said would not openly confront his ISF but could cause big problems. Mohan said that engaging with tribes to provide security would not help in Basrah, and his ISF had therefore stopped working with tribes. The tribes were not reliable and would change sides depending on who paid them more; he did think that tribes could be useful for gathering intelligence on smuggling and militia activities. (Note: Mohan is from the fairly powerful Al Furayja tribe, and he counts the powerful Beni-Malik tribe as his friends. End Note.)  
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